

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

# **Devon Avon Estuary Recommended Marine Conservation Zone**

**June 2018**

**Consultation on Sites Proposed for Designation in the Third  
Tranche of Marine Conservation Zones**



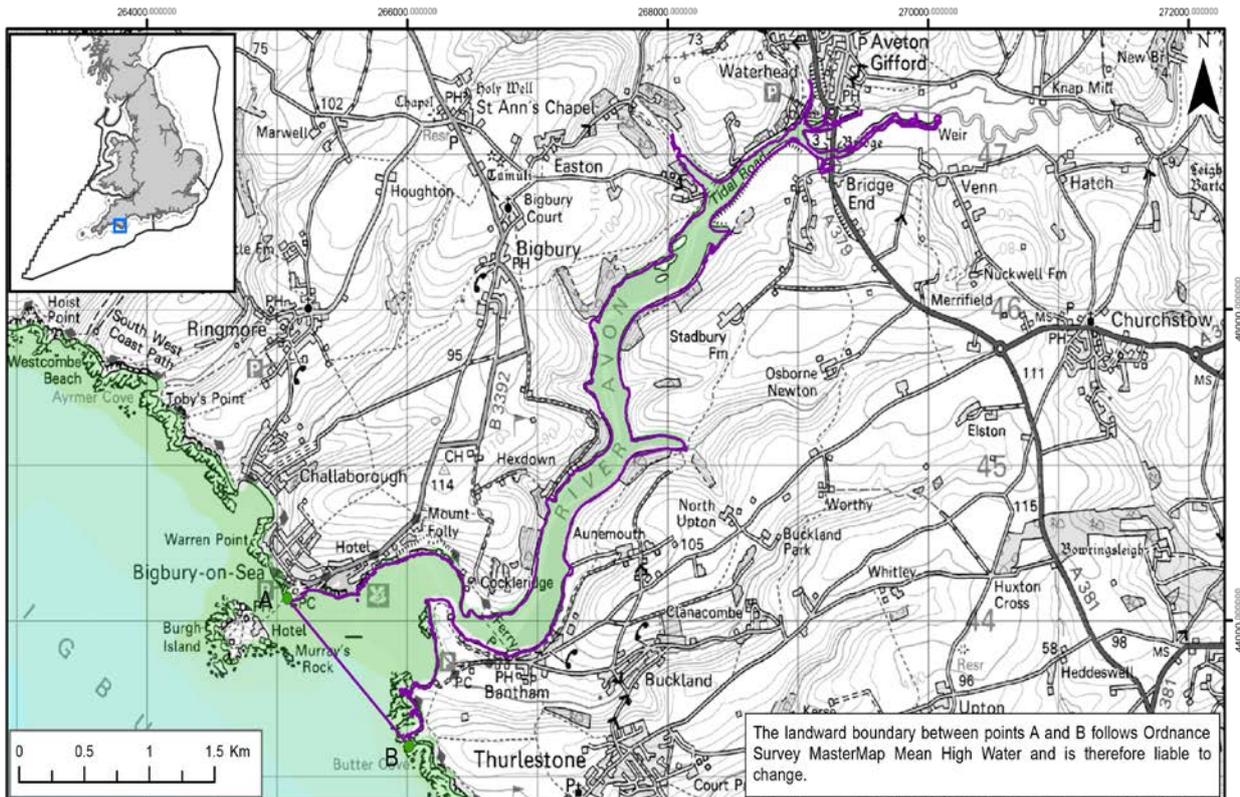
Devon Avon Estuary, Intertidal mud © Christine Singfield, Natural England

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## Where is the site located?

The Devon Avon Estuary recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) covers an area of 2 km<sup>2</sup> and is located on the south coast of Devon, in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea region. The site extends from the mouth of the estuary up to a tidal weir at Aveton Gifford.



## Why is the site environmentally important?

The Devon Avon Estuary is a narrow meandering drowned river valley of about 7 km in length, which lies within a steep sided valley. It is characterised by a subtidal river channel bisecting the intertidal areas, which are sandy in the outer reaches and more muddy in the inner reaches. The mouth of the estuary has semi-exposed rock platforms with rich rockpool, under-boulder and overhang communities on the lower shore.

The estuary is an important system supporting a variety of habitats and wildlife. Various species of worm, crustacean and shrimp can be found here. The rare tentacled lagoon worm (*Alkmaria romijni*) has also been recorded and lives in the thick, deep mud of the estuary. These small worms live within tubes made of mud in sheltered lagoons and estuaries and are particularly vulnerable to changes in their habitat.

Like all the main estuaries of the South West, the Devon Avon Estuary is an important nursery area for fish species and is potentially important for seahorse populations as it provides suitable food and shelter. The saltmarshes provide habitat for crustaceans, molluscs and a nursery area for fish, as well as feeding grounds for birds.



Devon Avon Estuary, intertidal sand and muddy sand © Christine Singfield, Natural England

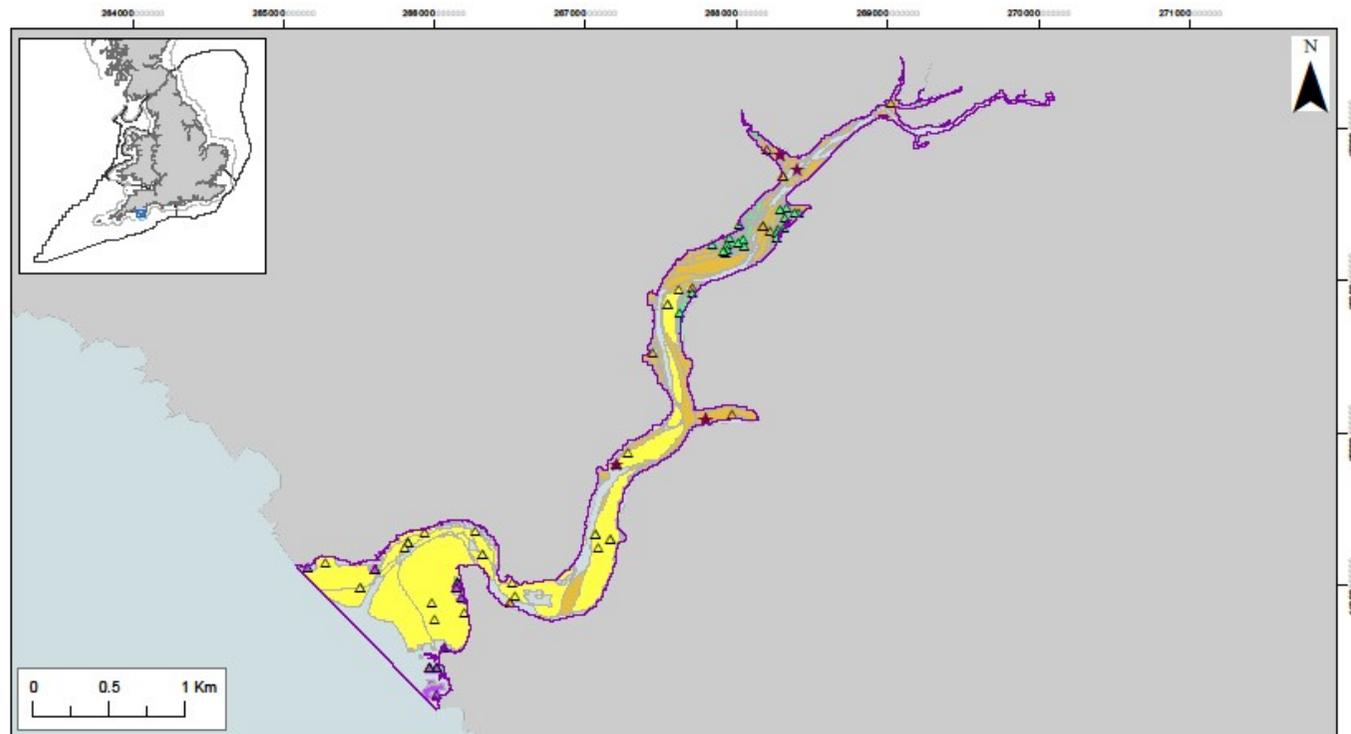
## What would this site protect?

Designation would protect the following features. You can read more about the features this site protects and why they are important [here](#).

Feature	General management approach
Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal mud	
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Tentacled lagoon worm ( <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> )	

## Where are the features located?

The following map shows the location of the features to be protected within the site. A range of different types of surveys have been used to create site maps. More detailed information on the techniques used can be found [here](#).



### Devon Avon Estuary rMCZ

- Recommended MCZ
- Regional MCZ Project Area
- 12nM Territorial Seas Limit
- Sea
- Land

### Features recommended for designation

- Tentacled lagoon-worm (*Aikmania romijni*)
- Moderate energy intertidal rock (A1.2)
- Intertidal sand and muddy sand (A2.2)
- Intertidal mud (A2.3)
- Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds (A2.5)
- Groundtruthing sampling points, such as diver survey, grab sampling, drop down video, walk over survey or core sampling
- Shaded areas represent habitats mapped according to data originating from surveys and mathematical models

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 (www.ukho.gov.uk). Map produced by  
 Natural England 2016.  
 Reference: Theme ID: 1477647  
 Map Projection: British National Grid

## Which activities are likely to be affected?

Management decisions are taken on a case by case basis by relevant regulators. If an activity is identified as requiring management this does not necessarily mean that it will need to be significantly restricted. Decisions will be based on the specifics of each case and any restrictions will depend on the sensitivity of the species, habitats or geological/geomorphological features to be protected to the activity taking place. More detail is available in the Impact Assessment.

For the Devon Avon Estuary MCZ it is not expected that any of the activities currently taking place on the site are likely to be affected.

## Which activities are not likely to be affected?

These activities are known to take place at this site but at their current levels of intensity the best available evidence indicates they are not likely to be damaging the features to be protected:

- Archaeological heritage
- Aquaculture
- Cables - power and telecommunication cables currently intersect the site
- Coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- Coastal infrastructure
- Commercial shipping
- Non-commercial fishing (e.g. bait digging)
- Recreation

## Additional Information

To read the advice provided by Natural England, please visit

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6079955233931264>

To read the advice provided by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, please visit

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7119>

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